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SC ASKS ALL HCS TO REGISTER SUO MOTU CASES TO MONITOR CASES AGAINST MPS/MLAS

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday directed Chief Justices of all High Courts across the country to register suo motu cases to monitor expeditious disposal of criminal cases pending against MPs and MLAs.

The bench, added that suo motu case may be heard by the Special Bench presided by the Chief Justice or a bench assigned by them.

It said that the special bench to be formed in every High Court will issue continuing directions to curb criminalisation of politics and may seek assistance of Advocate General and other officers of the state government.

The Supreme Court also said that the High Court may also call for status reports on the issue from all District and Session Courts under their jurisdiction.

It said that the "trial courts shall not adjourn the cases except for rare and compelling reasons", adding that stay orders granted by the High Court on trial will be vacated to ensure timely conclusion.

"The High Courts shall create an independent tab on their website providing district-wise information about the details of the year of filing, number of subject cases pending and stage of proceedings," the Supreme Court said.

It clarified that the Special Bench of High Courts may pass such orders or give such additional directions as are necessary for early disposal of cases against legislators, adding that it will be difficult to issue uniform guide-



lines. On September 11, the top court had reserved its judgment, clarifying that the issue pertaining to the validity of Section 8 of the Representation of Peoples Act which restricts the

period of disqualification from contesting elections to six years, will be examined separately.

A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed by Ashwini Kumar

Upadhyay under Article 32 of the Constitution seeking expeditious disposal of criminal cases against elected members of the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies.

The top court appreciated the "invaluable contribution and assistance" rendered by senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, who was appointed as amicus curiae (friend of the court) in the matter.

In 2018, the Supreme Court had directed that cases punishable with death or life imprisonment against sitting and former MPs/MLAs should be taken up on a priority basis, followed by cases punishable with imprisonment up to 5 years or more.

"Chief Justices of the High Courts shall register a suo motu case with the title 'In Re: designated courts for MPs/MLAs' to monitor early disposal of criminal cases pending against the members of Parliament and Legislative Assemblies."



D.Y. Chandrachud, CJI

Cash for Query: Ethics Committee adopts report on Mahua Moitra with 6:4 verdict

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ethics Committee of the Parliament on Thursday adopted the draft report against Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra in connection with the charges of alleged 'cash for Parliament questions' matter. The draft will be submitted to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla along with the panel's recommendations.

Speaking to the media after the meeting on Thursday afternoon here, Vinod Sonkar, Chairman of the Ethics Committee said: "The Ethics Committee probing the charges against Mahua Moitra was adopted today. It was supported by six members while four opposed it." Sonkar said that a detailed report is being sent to the Lok Sabha Speaker and the details of the fact finding have been mentioned in that.

He said that the draft report is being sent to the Speaker with the Committee's recommendation to the Speaker.

Sonkar, however, refused to share the details of the recommendations.

"We have adopted the draft report, and we will submit it with the Speaker tomorrow. He will take the action," he said, adding that the Committee members on the allegations of BJP Nishikant Dubey, affidavit of businessman Darshan Hiranandani and statement of advocate Jai Anant Dehadrai prepared a detailed report. He said that it is a 500-page report. Besides Sonkar, the committee includes BJP's Vishnu Datt Sharma, Sumedhanand Saraswati, Aparajita Sarangi, Rajdeep Roy, Sunita Duggal, and Subhash Bhamre, Ve Vaithilingam, N Uttam Kumar Reddy, and Preneet Kaur of the Congress, Balashowry Vallabhane (YSRCP), Hemant Godse (Shiv Sena), Giridhari Yadav (JD-U), PR Natarajan



(CPI-M), and Kunwar Danish Ali (BSP).

According to sources, Sonkar, Saraswati, Sarangi, Godse, Kaur and Roy voted in favour while Ali, Yadav, Vaithilingam and Natarajan opposed the draft report.

On November 2, Moitra along with the opposition MPs of the Committee stormed out of the meeting accusing the committee's chairperson Sonkar of asking her personal and unethical questions.

The ethics committee is probing BJP MP Nishikant Dubey's allegations that Moitra accepted cash and favours for asking questions in Lok Sabha at the behest of businessman Hiranandani.

Nagaland Assembly passes Municipal Bill with 33% reservation for women

Kohima | Agencies

In a significant development, the Nagaland Assembly on Thursday passed the Nagaland Municipal Bill 2023 by voice vote with 33 per cent reservation for women.

The Bill was passed after the select committee headed by Deputy Chief Minister T.R. Zeliang presented the report on the Nagaland Municipal Bill in the House, recommending 33 per cent reservation for women.

Many powerful Naga organisations had earlier claimed that reservation for women in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) would go against their community's customary laws.

In Nagaland, over 95 per cent of the land and its



resources belong to the people and the community, while the government owns only about 5 per cent of the total area, including reserve forests, roads. Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, while participating in the discussion on the Bill, said that it was moved after threadbare consultation with civil society organisations and Naga tribal hohos.

He also said that provisions related to taxes, land and

buildings have been excluded from the Nagaland Municipal Bill. However, the provision for 33 per cent reservation for women in the ULBs has been retained as directed by the Supreme Court. The provision for one-third reservation for women in the office of the chairperson in the ULB, which was there in the earlier Municipal Act, was also not included in the Nagaland Municipal Bill.

COPS RUSH MEDICAL HELP TO WOMAN WHO DELIVERED BABY ON PAVEMENT

Thane (Maharashtra): In a heart-warmer, Thane Police's 'Nirbhaya' team helped rush medical aid and saved the life of a woman who delivered a baby on a busy city pavement, officials said here on Thursday.

The development took place at around 1 p.m. on Thursday when a pregnant woman, Suvarna S. Meergal (30), suddenly went into labour, fell on the footpath and delivered a baby right there before losing consciousness, as hundreds of shocked people gathered around.

Some locals informed the PCR which alerted the Vinoba Bhawe Nagar police station from where a Nirbhaya team of policewomen rushed to the footpath near the Kamani Junction.

They immediately shifted the woman to the nearby Anandibai Joshi Hospital with the infant's umbilical cord still attached, where the medics took charge of the emergency case.

UK to add India to safe states list; no asylum rights for Indian illegal migrants

London | Agencies

In a key step in delivery of the Illegal Migration Act, the UK government plans to add India and Georgia to a list of safe states to speed up the process of returning people who have travelled from either country illegally.

Deeming India safe means that if an individual arrives illegally, Britain will not admit their claim to the country's asylum system, the Home Office said in a statement. According to the draft legislation laid in Parliament on Wednesday, the move will strengthen the immigration system and help prevent abuse, including by people making unfounded protection claims.

The Home Office said

that Indian and Georgian small boat arrivals have increased over the last year despite individuals not being at obvious risk of persecution.

"We must stop people making dangerous and illegal journeys to the UK from fundamentally safe countries," British Home Secretary Suella Braverman said.

"Expanding this list will allow us to more swiftly remove people with no right to be here and sends a clear message that if you come here illegally, you cannot stay," the minister added. Other countries deemed safe by the UK include Albania and Switzerland, plus the EU and EEA states.

A country can only be added to the safe states list

-- known legislatively as Section 80AA -- if the Home Secretary is satisfied that there is no serious risk of persecution of its nationals, and; removal of nationals to that country cannot go against the UK's obligations under the Human Rights Convention. The recent measures sit within the Illegal Migration Act 2023, which aims to stop the boats by changing the law so that people who come to the UK illegally can be detained and then swiftly returned to a safe third country or their home country. Further measures, including the duty to remove, will be rolled out in the coming months. Following Parliamentary scrutiny and approval, the Illegal Migration Act received Royal Assent on



July 20, 2023, and ensures people do not risk their lives by making lethal and unnecessary journeys across the Channel.

The Conservative government has made stopping small boats of asylum seekers from crossing the Channel one of the five key priorities of his leadership, but since the year began, more than 26,000 migrants have arrived via perilous routes, according to the latest government figures.

Maha's 1 mn selfies for 'Meri Mati, Mera Desh' campaign sets Guinness record

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra has bagged a unique entry in the Guinness World Records (GWR) for its 'Meri Mati, Mera Desh' mega-campaign involving over one million school and college students clicking selfies and posting them on social media as a gesture of love for the country, officials said here on Thursday.

A special function was organised at the Convocation Hall of University of Mumbai which was attended by Governor Ramesh Bais, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Deputy CM Devendra Fadnis and others where the GWR handed over a certificate on the new record.

The 'Meri Mati, Mera Desh' campaign was launched nationwide by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of the 75 years of Independence, implemented through the National Social Service and Nehru Yuva Kendra



Sanghatans involving students from schools and colleges all over the country.

The Department of Higher & Technical Education encouraged lakhs of students from schools and 7,000 colleges under 40 universities to participate in the drive paying tributes to the freedom fighters all over India. Shinde termed the GWR achievement as a Diwali gift, while Fadnis said this has knocked down the previous record held by China, as they thanked all the students, the people and the officials for making it possible. On the occasion, the Governor released a set of four volumes in six parts of the complete works of legendary Dalit poet, writer and social reformer, Sahitya Ratna Tukaram B. Sathé, popular as 'Lok Shahir Annabhau Sathé' (1920-1969).

Delhi continues to be 'gas chamber', AQI remains in 'severe' category

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The overall Air Quality Index on Thursday evening was at 407, in the 'severe' category, according to data from the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting And Research (SAFAR).

In the national Capital, the Ashok Vihar station was in the severe category with PM 2.5 at 425 and PM 10 at 433 while the CO was at 90, under 'satisfactory' category at 6 p.m., as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good'; 51 and 100 'satisfactory'; 101 and 200 'moderate'; 201 and 300 'poor'; 301 and 400 'very poor'; and 401 and 500 'severe'.

At the Bawana station PM 2.5 was recorded at 440, in the 'severe' category and PM 10 at 389, in the 'very poor' category, while the CO



reached 107 'moderate'. At the Delhi Technical University (DTU) station, the PM 10 reached 420 under 'severe' category while PM 2.5 was at 313 under 'very poor' category on Thursday at 6 p.m. The CO was recorded at 85 and NO2 was at 78, under the 'satisfactory' category. The station at Dwarka

reached 107 'moderate'. At the Delhi Technical University (DTU) station, the PM 10 reached 420 under 'severe' category while PM 2.5 was at 313 under 'very poor' category on Thursday at 6 p.m. The CO was recorded at 85 and NO2 was at 78, under the 'satisfactory' category. The station at Dwarka

The PM 2.5 at ITO was recorded at 418, putting it in the 'severe' category while PM 10 reached 391, placing it under 'very poor' category.

The CO was recorded at 129 and NO2 at 193 'moderate' on Thursday.

At Lodhi Road, the AQI with PM 2.5 concentration was at 338 under the 'very poor' category, PM10 was recorded at 266, in the 'poor' category while CO was at 113 in the 'moderate category'. At Punjabi Bagh, the PM 2.5 reached at 411 and PM 10 at 405, both under 'severe category'.

Earlier in the day, addressing a press conference, Delhi's Environment Minister, Gopal Rai, said that pollution levels in northern India have remained stagnant. Over the last eight to ten days, there has been slow air movement, decreasing temperatures, and the accumulation of pollution.

India files appeal against death sentence awarded to 8 ex-Navy personnel in Qatar



Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday said that India has filed an appeal with Qatar over the death penalty to eight former Indian Navy personnel, who were arrested in August last year and sentenced last month.

At a media briefing here, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, "There is a court of first instance in Qatar that passed a judgment on October 26 in a case involving eight Indian employees of the Al Dhara company." He said that the judgment is "confidential" and it has

been shared with the legal team.

"And they are deciding the next steps and an appeal has already been filed," Bagchi said.

He said that we are also engaged with the Qatari authorities.

The eight persons were arrested last year after being charged with spying for Israel by Qatar authorities. The men also include decorated officers who once commanded major Indian warships, were working for Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services, a private firm that provided training and related services to Qatar's armed forces.



POOR AQI: 1,000 TANKERS TO SPRAY WATER ON MUMBAI ROADS, GOVT TO EXPLORE CLOUD SEEDING

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Concerned over the poor Air Quality Index (AQI) in Mumbai and other parts of the state, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Thursday ordered 1,000 tankers to spray water on all city roads to curb dust pollution in the country's commercial capital, while considering the feasibility of artificial rain through cloud seeding.

Addressing a special meeting to combat air pollution, Shinde said that water should be sprayed to prevent the spread of dust through the ongoing construction sites or public and private developmental projects all over Mumbai.

He called for deploying special teams to clean the accumulated dust, and serve notices to all construction sites in Mumbai and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) to make their vicinity dust-free.

Shinde has directed that all construction sites must employ anti-smog guns, sprinklers and metal sheets to cover the ongoing work to



prevent the dust spilling outside plus ensure that the people especially pedestrians are not inconvenienced by the metal sheets. The CM called

upon the officials to make the fight against pollution a people's movement with their participation in different campaigns to make their

localities pollution-free.

Shinde said all cities and civic bodies must strictly adhere to the recent Bombay High Court guidelines on controlling pollution, and the Transport Department must crack down on vehicles that do not cover the dirt-debris load while transporting them to and from sites.

Stressing to increase the green cover, the CM urged all major cities in the state to increase the urban forest through the Miyawaki technique, plant more trees around open spaces and grounds, and use sprinklers to reduce airborne dust particles.

Here, Shinde urged the BMC to examine and explore a cloud-seeding experiment to create artificial rain that can reduce air pollution in Mumbai. Last week, the BMC had announced plans to wash all major roads running around 600 km in the city with recycled water as part of its slew of initiatives to clean the Mumbai air.

The concerned authorities and civic bodies will also submit a weekly review of pollution control measures.

Nitish Kumar hits out at Jitan Ram Manjhi in Bihar Assembly

Patna | Agencies

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday launched a no-holds barred attack on his predecessor Jitan Ram Manjhi inside the Assembly, saying that he became the Chief Minister "due to my mistake and foolishness".

Nitish Kumar used some rough language, saying he was doing so to expose him.

He also said that Manjhi does not have any sense and even his family members considered him senseless and useless.

"He (Manjhi) does not have any idea of how he became the Chief Minister. It was my mistake that I made that man the Chief Minister in 2013. He does not have any sense. He just speaks unnecessarily here and there. His statements have no value.

"In August 2022, I separated from the NDA and formed the government with 6 parties in Bihar. He ran away from the NDA and joined us. I asked him to stay there but he came with us. We deliberately threw him out from the government," Nitish Kumar said.

Following Nitish Kumar's attack, Manjhi objected to it and kept saying this is wrong but neither Nitish Kumar nor Speaker Awadh Bhari Choudhary were ready to listen to him.

Nitish Kumar asked Manjhi to sit. "Baitho na yaar, kuch jaante ho? (Do you know any-



thing?") Addressing the legislators, Nitish Kumar said: "When I let you in 2013... I made him Chief Minister. In just two months, my party leaders started complaining to me that he is the wrong person. Hence, I removed him and became Chief Minister again. Now, he is saying he was also a Chief Minister of Bihar in the past. He became the Chief Minister due to my foolishness."

Looking towards the press gallery, he said: "You people are unnecessarily publishing him. He does not have any sense." Addressed the BJP, he said: "I have a suggestion for you. He (Manjhi) is roaming behind you. He has a desire to become the Governor. So make him Governor. Why are you not making him Governor."

Narrow escape for KTR during election rally

Hyderabad | Agencies

Telangana Minister and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K.T. Rama Rao had a narrow escape when he fell off an election campaign vehicle during a rally in Armoor town of Nizamabad district on Thursday.

KTR sustained minor injury when he along with other BRS leaders fell off the vehicle as the driver applied sudden brakes.

The BRS leader along with other local leaders of BRS was standing on the vehicle. When the driver applied a sudden brake, the iron railing collapsed resulting in the leaders falling on the ground. The minister's security men immediately rushed to his rescue.



The incident occurred when KTR along with others were going in a rally to the office of the returning officer for filing of nomination by the BRS candidate from

Armoor, Jeevan Reddy. The KTR's office said that after the incident, KTR continued with the rally and later left for Kodangal for the roadshow.

Manipur Govt to lift ban on mobile internet in district HQs unaffected by violence

Imphal | Agencies

The Manipur Government has initiated the process to lift the ban on mobile internet services in four Naga tribal dominated hill district headquarters which have not been affected by the ethnic violence that has been going on in the state since May 3, officials said on Thursday.

Officials said that the process has been initiated to withdraw the internet ban on a trial basis in the district headquarters of Ukhrul, Senapati, Chandel and Tamenglong, which are Naga tribal inhabited areas.

The Manipur Government took the initiative after the Manipur High Court on Monday directed the state government to resume mobile internet services, on a trial basis, in all those district headquarters which have not been affected by the ethnic violence.

In view of the state government's steps to resume the mobile internet services in four hill district headquar-



ters, the All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) on Thursday announced the withdrawal of the economic blockade from the highways. The ANSAM in a statement said that in view of the dire hardship faced by the general public in the midst of the ongoing conflict and following the assurance by the Convener, Naga Legislator Forum (NLF), Awangbow Newmai, to fulfil the two

legitimate demands of the organisation, the emergency meeting of ANSAM, Executive Council and representative of NLF, has been resolved to temporarily suspend the ongoing economic blockade being called by the association. Newmai is also a minister of the BJP-led Manipur Government. The minister also assured that the result of the examination to recruit the Assistant Professor (145+45 ST special

drive) would be declared promptly.

The ongoing agitation shall be resumed anytime in the event of failure to implement the agreements signed between the state government and ANSAM in the presence of the Chief Minister N Biren Singh on October 26, the statement said.

As a preventive measure and to curb the spread of harmful messages, photos, and videos by anti-social elements, Manipur Commissioner, Home, T Ranjit Singh recently further extended the mobile internet ban across the state. After the devastating ethnic violence broke out between the Meitei and tribal Kuki communities on May 3, mobile internet was banned in the entire northeastern state. After the situation was largely normalised, the ban was lifted on September 23, but it had to be imposed again on September 26 after hundreds of students clashed with security forces following images of the bodies of two young missing students, including a girl, circulating on the social media.

DELHI COURT GRANTS BAIL TO BAJRANG PUNIA IN CRIMINAL DEFAMATION CASE

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Delhi court on Thursday granted bail to wrestler Bajrang Punia in a criminal defamation complaint filed against him by sports coach Naresh Dahiya.

Dahiya has alleged that Punia, in company of other wrestlers/persons, made defamatory remarks against him in a press conference, held on May 10 at Jantar Mantar during the protest by female wrestlers against alleged sexual harassment by BJP MP and former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

On August 3, Metropolitan Magistrate Yashdeep Chahal of Patiala House Courts had summoned Punia in the matter, holding that he is of the prima facie view that all the ingredients of defamation were made out.

Dahiya has alleged that Punia had said that the former did not have any



credibility to oppose the agitation (wrestlers' protest) since he himself was facing a rape case.

Punia's counsel had earlier moved exemption from appearance application thrice on different grounds saying that the wrestler went to

Kyrgyzstan ahead of the Asian Games and its practice sessions.

Once it sought exemption stating medical grounds, and the court had granted it as well.

On Thursday, Punia appeared before the court and was granted bail.

Now the matter will be taken up next on March 5, 2024.

During the hearing earlier, the magistrate had said that at the stage of summoning, it was fairly settled that the court was not required to go into a comparative analysis of the possible defence that may be taken by the accused.

"On a consideration of the complaint, supporting documents and pre-summoning evidence, I am of the prima facie view that all the ingredients of defamation are made out," the magistrate had said. He had said that the statement made in the press conference appears to be a result of malicious intent and not made in good faith.

"In view of the same, let the accused, namely, Bajrang Punia be summoned for the commission of offence punishable under Section 499 read with Section 500 (both dealing with criminal defamation) of the IPC."

SC stays execution of non-bailable warrant against Randeep Surjewala

Team Absolute | New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered that a non-bailable warrant against Congress National Spokesperson Randeep Surjewala be kept in abeyance for now and not be immediately executed.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India, DY Chandrachud, granted a period of four weeks to the senior Congress political leader to approach the trial court for cancellation of the non-bailable warrant issued in relation to an FIR registered against Surjewala in 2000.

"The petitioner is granted liberty to move an application for cancellation of non-bailable warrant to trial court within a period of four weeks," ordered the Bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Mishra.

The Bench said that the warrant issued by the Varanasi Special MP/MLA Court on November 7 will not be executed for the next five weeks.

The top court decided to take up the matter for urgent hearing after an out-of-turn mentioning was made by senior advocate



Abhishek Manu Singhvi, who appeared on Surjewala's behalf.

Singhvi explained that a non-bailable warrant was issued by the trial court despite the verdict being reserved by the Allahabad High Court on Surjewala's plea seeking quashing of the criminal case.

2 women die, 13 suffer burn injuries after bus catches fire in Gurugram

Gurugram | Agencies

Two women have died while 13 people suffered burns after a moving sleeper bus caught fire on the Delhi-Gurugram Expressway.

The incident took place on Wednesday night.

Police said that following a complaint, an FIR has been registered at Sector 40 police station on Thursday.

The deceased were identified as Maya and Gayatri a resident of Uttar Pradesh.

The police have handed over the bodies to the kin after the post-mortem while all injured, who have suffered 30 to 50 per cent burns, are undergoing treatment.

A senior officer said that the cause of the fire is yet to be known and an investigation is underway.

Police said that the incident took place around 9 pm on Wednesday when a passenger bus travelling from Sector 12 Gurugram to Uttar



Pradesh's Hamirpur caught fire near the Jharsa flyover on the main carriageway connecting Delhi and Jaipur.

A senior police official said that some prohibited items were kept in the trunk of the bus which caught fire.

"We have received details about the owner of the bus and are trying to arrest the

driver and the helper," he said. Fire Department Deputy Director Gulshan Kalra told IANS that three fire engines were rushed to the spot from Sector-29 fire station after we received information that a sleeper bus with registration number AR 01 K 7707 had caught fire on the carriage-way.

All Delhi Govt ministers to be on ground to ensure implementation of GRAP-IV

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Amid rising pollution levels and to ensure implementation of measures to control it, Delhi Government ministers will be on the ground at different locations across the city, sources said on Thursday.

The decision came after a meeting of ministers, including Gopal Rai, Atishi, Saurabh Bhardwaj and others regarding pollution in the city.

"The government is unhappy with administrative officials regarding negligence in implementing the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)," said the sources.

Addressing a press conference, Delhi's Environment Minister, Gopal Rai, stated that pollution levels in northern India have remained stagnant.

Over the last eight to ten days, there has been slow air movement, decreasing temperatures, and the accumulation of pollution.



"Various sources contribute to this pollution, including biomass, vehicles, and stubble burning. In GRAP-IV, several vehicles, including BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel ones, have been banned. However, it has been observed that GRAP IV orders

are not effectively enforced at the ground level by administrative authorities," said Rai.

"In response, a meeting was convened to ensure the implementation of GRAP at the ground level, attended by all ministers. It was decided in

the meeting that all ministers would personally visit various districts to monitor the situation," said Rai.

Rai will be present in the north and northeast districts, Transport Minister Kailash Gehlot in southwest and west districts, Education Minister Atishi in east and southeast districts, and Health Minister Saurabh Bhardwaj in south and New Delhi. Minister of Food Supplies Imran Hussain will cover central and Shahdara districts and Minister Raj Kumar Anand will oversee the northwest.

"The ministers will also issue directives to officials on the ground, including visits to border areas and construction sites to ensure proper dust control measures. All bus depots will be monitored, and buses arriving from other states will be inspected," said Rai.

"Given the current situation, it is expected that these measures will need to be in place for at least the next week," said Rai.



Wherever BJP faces a rout, CBI, ED and ECI step in to 'help': Sanjay Raut

Team Absolute | Mumbai

In a scathing attack, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Thursday alleged that whenever the ruling BJP at the Centre faces electoral defeat, the Central Bureau of Investigation, Enforcement Directorate and Election Commission of India step in to "help" it out.

Calling the CBI, ED and ECI as "parrots" of the Centre, Raut contended that they seem to become active in states going to polls where BJP confronts a debacle, or wherever the Opposition parties are in power.

"We have experienced it even in Maharashtra...The Opposition parties are being systematically targeted by the central probe agencies... The ECI took a decision in the case of the Shiv Sena (split) under pressure from the Central government," Raut said, speaking with mediapersons.

He added that though the Shiv Sena was found-



ed by the late Balasaheb Thackeray and now led by his son and ex-CM Uddhav Thackeray, after a couple of dozen MLAs switched sides in June 2022, the entire party was handed over to the breakaway group (led by CM Eknath Shinde). "This proves the intent and the character of the ECI... A similar move is now underway with the

Nationalist Congress Party founded by Sharad Pawar, with a splinter group led by Ajit Pawar breaking away (July 2023). What justice can we expect from such an ECI," asked Raut sharply.

Attacking the state government, the Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief Spokesperson claimed that a virtual "gang-war" had erupted in the Maharashtra cabinet yesterday over the issues of reservation for Marathas with contradictory statements emanating from different ministers of the ruling alliance and over whom the CM has "no control" at all.

Ruling Shiv Sena Minister Shambhuraj Desai hit back at Raut, saying the word "gang-war" was laughable, and though the cabinet meeting went off very amicably, "deliberate misinformation is being spread around".

"Raut's informers are feeding him wrong information... someday, he will be in serious trouble because of this," warned Desai, adding that all the ministers came out in an atmosphere of camaraderie after the cabinet meeting.

Abstain from demolition during Diwali, Bombay High Court tells local bodies

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court has directed all planning and local authorities to abstain from the demolition of any structure during the "Diwali period" and "until November 20-21". A division bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Kamal Khata passed the order on Wednesday while hearing a petition filed by a retired Indian Navy officer challenging a notice issued to him for the demolition of his farmhouse in Pune. "As a general directive, we would request all Planning and Local Authorities to stay their hands on demolitions during the Diwali period and certainly until 20th/21st November 2023. There are intervening public holidays



between 12th November 2023 (Diwali) and 15th November 2023 (Bhaubeej)," the bench directed. Commander Baldevsingh Bhagwansingh Bhatti (retired) had challenged an October 31 notice issued to him by the Pune Metropolitan Region Development Authority (PMRDA) ordering the demolition of his farmhouse structure at Kurvande village in Mawal.

Senior advocate Anil Singh, appearing for Bhatti, told the court the structure has been in existence since 1996 and whether or not it had sufficient permission needs to be examined. The bench noted it did not see any urgency in removing the structure and granted an interim injunction on demolition till December 1.

Bombay High Court orders tax refund of Rs1,128 crore to Vodafone Idea

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Bombay High Court has directed the Income Tax department to refund Rs 1,128 crore to Vodafone Idea Limited paid by the telecom operator in taxes for the assessment year 2016-2017.

The assessment order passed by the department in August this year was "time barred and hence cannot be sustained," the HC noted in its judgement on Wednesday.

A division bench of Justices K R Shriram and Neela Gokhale also took a strong view against the assessing officer for showing "laxity and lethargy" in not passing the final order within the mandated 30-day time and thus causing a huge loss to the exchequer and public.

The court passed its judgment on a petition filed by the Vodafone Idea Limited claiming the I-T department failed to refund the amount paid by it for the assessment year 2016-2017 which, it said, was in excess of the

legitimate tax due on its income.

The bench in its order noted the case of Vodafone was "quite elementary" and that it was "constrained to observe the complete apathy and negligent approach of the assessing officer concerned in discharging his duties" in accordance with provisions of the Income Tax Act.

"Any dereliction and remissness on the part of the officers entrusted with a duty to act within the strict contours of law affects the exchequer and has far reaching consequences on the prosperity and economic stability of the nation," the order said.

Laxity in this regard has a propensity to destroy and bring to naught any effective system put in place by the government for efficient and transparent administration of taxation laws and its regulations, it added.

The court recommended a detailed enquiry to be initiated on the failure on part of the assessing officer concerned to act in accordance with provisions of the Income Tax Act.

"Strict action should be taken against persons responsible for the laxity and lethargy displayed which has caused a huge loss to the exchequer and in turn to the citizens of this country," the HC said, directing for its order copy to be circulated to the Union Ministry of Finance.

As per the petition, the assessing officer passed a draft order pertaining to the assessment year in December 2019 against which the company filed objections before the Dispute Resolution Panel (DRP) in January 2020.

In March 2021, the DRP issued certain directions.

The Vodafone Idea Limited in its plea said the assessing officer ought to have passed the final order in the case within 30 days as mandated in the Act. Since the officer failed to pass the final order, it was entitled to a refund with interest, the company said.

The company also said after it filed the petition in HC in June 2023 seek-

ing refund of the amount, the assessing officer passed the final assessment order in August.

The tax department claimed due to the "Faceless Assessment Regime" it had not received the DRP's directions.

The high court, however, refused to accept this and said the DRP directions were always visible and accessible on the Income Tax Business Application (ITBA) portal. There was also no "whisper of any explanation" as to why the assessing officer remained inactive and silent for two long years in the case and swung into action only when he received information of the petition filed, it said. "We have no hesitation in holding that the assessment order dated August 31, 2023 passed by the assessing officer two years after the DRP directions, is time barred and cannot be sustained," the bench said.

Hence, the Vodafone Idea Limited was entitled to receive the refund together with interest, the HC said.

Four held for stealing mobile phones; 29 handsets recovered



Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Navi Mumbai Police in Maharashtra have reportedly arrested four persons from Navi Mumbai city for alleged thefts of mobile phones, the police said on Thursday, according to the news agency.

The police said, after their arrest, the cops also seized as many as 29 stolen mobile phones from their possession.

According to the news agency, with these arrests, the police have detected 17 offences of mobile phone thefts registered in Panvel taluka, Kamothe, Taloja, Panvel town, Khandeshwar, Kalamboli, Kharghar and CBD police station areas in Navi Mumbai, senior police inspector Umesh Gavli said.

After analysing CCTV footage and based on intelli-

gence and technical inputs, the police on Wednesday arrested the four persons, all habitual offenders in the age group of 19 to 24 and hailing from Jalna, Hingoli, Yavatmal and Satara, he said.

The accused were working as masons in Navi Mumbai, the official said. The police have seized 29 stolen mobiles and a motor-bike collectively worth Rs 5.02 lakh from the accused, he added.

Meanwhile, in another matter in Mumbai, the Mumbai police arrested three persons for allegedly stealing mobile phones onboard crowded BEST buses and recovered 32 stolen devices, an official said on Tuesday, reported news agency.

The accused Shoaib Mobin Khan (21), Baitullah Kalamuddin Khan (36) and

Nadir Sheikh (38) allegedly targeted commuters travelling in crowded buses at different locations, he said.

The police first apprehended Shoaib and Baitullah, who revealed that they sold stolen phones to Nadir who resold them in the market at cheaper rates.

Following a raid at Nadir's house, the police recovered 32 mobile phones, he added. In another case, the Mumbai police have arrested three persons in connection with the break-in and theft at a shop from where valuables worth Rs 63 lakh were stolen in the western suburb of Khar here, an official said on Tuesday.

The police on Sunday arrested Gulab Ganesh Marwadi alias Akshay (25), Surya Mani Nadar (19) and Sanjay Kedare (21) from the Andheri and Juhu areas, he said.

India's first-ever shipment of bananas by sea to Europe flagged off

Team Absolute | Mumbai

India's first ever shipment of bananas by the sea route to Europe was flagged off on Thursday. The groundbreaking initiative organised by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is aimed at enhancing the market share of Indian bananas in the European market. A total of 19.50 metric tons of bananas were exported by the APEDA registered exporter M/s INI Farms Pvt. Ltd. from Maharashtra. The consignment of bananas was dispatched from the packhouse of M/s INI Farms Pvt. Ltd, at Vasunde, Baramati - Kurkumbh Road in Pune district and it will be carried out via sea transportation through



Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) in Mumbai. The entire support to commence export activities systematically was given by APEDA to M/s INI Farms Pvt. Ltd. marking the initiation of a new era in Indian banana export.

Efforts taken on war footing to curb Mumbai's pollution, says Eknath Shinde

Team Absolute | Mumbai

The Maharashtra government will work on a war footing to curb pollution by washing Mumbai's roads and clearing debris from construction sites, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said on Thursday.

Talking to reporters after chairing a review meeting on the issue, Shinde said he had detailed discussions with the



environment ministry, civic chiefs, and collectors from other parts of the state on ways to tackle rising pollution levels.

"I have given instructions

to concerned authorities to take up the task of curbing pollution on a war footing. The BMC has been asked to use more manpower to clean roads using water and hire tankers for the purpose," the CM said. The CM said foggers (devices that create fog through intense spraying) must be used at construction sites, while the administration has been asked to focus on urban deforestation.

BJP doing politics over Ram temple and it poses danger to Hindu religion: Maha Congress chief

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole Thursday said that the way Bharatiya Janata Party doing "politics" over the Ram temple poses a danger to the Hindu religion.

Speaking to reporters in Maharashtra's Nagpur, Patole said it is the people of the country who have contributed towards the construction of a grand Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"If the BJP is doing politics in the name of God then it is committing a big sin. I myself have contributed to the construction of the temple out of my faith. Even, we want a grand temple of Bhagwan Shri Ram. Rajiv ji (ex-PM Rajiv Gandhi) himself had performed the 'shilanyas' there," he said.

However, the way Bharatiya Janata Party is doing politics over this issue poses a danger to "Hindu dharma", he said.

While the temple's inauguration in January should be celebrated like a festival, the Bharatiya Janata Party is behaving as if the temple belongs to them, said Patole, responding to a query about Madhya Pradesh Congress chief Kamal Nath's reported remark that the saffron party was treating the temple as its



private property. Asked about Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar deciding to increase caste quotas from the existing 50 per cent to 65 per cent, Patole said the BJP is opposing the caste census as it is trying to finish the reservation system.

Patole said the proportion of the poor has increased in the country and the decision taken by Nitish Kumar is appropriate. However, the BJP-led central government will not approve that, he said. The Congress leader also targeted the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government calling it anti-farmer. Despite a drought-like situation, the government is not announcing drought in the state. It is also not purchasing the produce from farmers, he alleged.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut Thursday claimed there was a "gang war like" situation in the Maharashtra cabinet over the issue of Maratha reservation.

Talking to reporters here, Raut further said the society has been divided on caste lines because of a "weak" and "unstable" government at the helm of affairs.

Raut said, "The chief minister's writ isn't there on the ministers because of which they are at each other's throat. The situation is such that ministers may beat up each other. There is a gang war like situation in the cabinet." He was referring to the recent war of words between state ministers Chhagan Bhujbal and Shambhuraj Desai.

Private bus with 40 passengers rolls down to river bank on Goa-Mumbai road



Team Absolute | Mumbai

A private luxury bus coming to Mumbai from Goa veered off the road and rolled down to the bank of a river in Maharashtra's Kolhapur district, the officials said on Thursday.

They said that the accident took place after the driver of the bus reportedly misjudged a bridge on Thursday.

There were no injuries, a police official said. The bus was carrying 40 passengers when the incident took place in the Sahawadi area in the morning, he said.

Bus driver Hrishikesh Jagdish Bhat (23) lost control of the vehicle and it went off the road and

rolled down to the bank of a river, he said.

No one was injured in the accident, the official said, adding that traffic on the road was briefly affected. In another incident, two persons were killed when a truck hit a private bus on the Samruddhi Expressway in Maharashtra's Buldhana district on Thursday, a police official said.

The accident took place at around 4 am in Mehkar area of Buldhana, located about 350 km from Nagpur, when the bus driver had stopped the vehicle in a lane for checking its tyres, he said.

The bus was on way to Nagpur from Mumbai. The truck hit the bus from its rear side, killing its driver and a passenger, the official said. The Samruddhi Mahamarg, named Hindu

Hrudaysamrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samruddhi Mahamarg, is a 701-km-long expressway connecting Mumbai and Nagpur.

It traverses 10 districts including Nagpur, Washim, Wardha, Ahmednagar, Buldhana, Aurangabad, Amravati, Jalna, Nashik and Thane. A number of accidents have been witnessed on the expressway since it became operational in December last year. Meanwhile, after the recent accidents on the Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Expressway, the state government authority has decided to install rumble strips every 5 km on the operational stretch. Further, sculptures will be erected along the carriageway to keep motorists alert, an official said.



Dhanteras - Special 2023

Dhanteras Festival of Prosperity, Happiness and Joy

Lalit Garg



Dhanteras is the festival of Prosperity, Happiness and Joy that can boost economic growth. Literal meaning of Dhanteras is qualitative correction of the economy. On this day, lamps of hope are decorated in homes and in markets currency is exchanged. It is believed that things purchased on this day increase manifold. It has been told in the scriptures that by taking some measures on this day, the wealth of the grain is filled eternally in the house and the grace of Mother Lakshmi remains forever. According to the Indian system, all the worship is coordinated behavior of these three forms i.e. physical, spiritual and semi-spiritual. According to religious beliefs, in this festival Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped physically in the form of gold, silver, coins etc., and spiritually by accepting the relationship with the Divine Lakshmi.

The decoration of houses with flowers, diyas, rangoli patterns etc. is done to reveal the beauty of Lakshmi's spiritual form. The worship of Goddess Lakshmi i.e. abode of wealth and happiness and prosperity is done in this festival in the above three ways. When we meditate on wealth, we thank the universal soul for its abundance. We also pray for more so that we can become more prosperous. This prosperity is not only of gold and silver but also of knowledge, joy, confidence, peace and love. Gold silver is only an external symbol. Wealth is within us. There is a lot of love, peace and joy within. What more do you want than this? Knowledge is real wealth. Your character, your peace and self-confidence are your real wealth. When you move forward in union with God, there is no more wealth than this. This royal idea comes only when you are united with God and his infinity. When the wave remembers that it is associated with the sea and is part of the ocean, it gives immense power.

Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (Prosperity), Kama (Pleasure) and Moksha (liberation) have been the objectives of life in Indian culture. There have always been efforts to achieve them. Along with them religion has also been given equal importance and the need to coordinate between the two has also been expressed, but whenever their efforts to coordinate are weakened, then there is an imbalance and chaos in the society. It has been said in the scriptures that the meaning of wealth is only when the life of a

person is full of virtues. But in recent years, our society's mindset and standards regarding prosperity have changed. Today, prosperity has come to mean only financial prosperity. Human values and ideologies have been marginalized in the society and earning money and wishing money is becoming the biggest goal. Why did this happen? Are these the seeds of this trend in our traditions or is it a result of market pressures? Where will this kind of mentality take society? These are some important questions, which need to be churned on a holy festival like Dhanteras.

Lakshmi's form is trident. She lives in body, mind and money. There are five types of happiness - body, mind, wealth, wife and children. There are eight forms of Lakshmi. Adya Lakshmi or Mahalakshmi (Virgo), Dhan Lakshmi (wealth, wealth, investment, economy), Dhanya Lakshmi (food), Gajalakshmi (animal and natural wealth), Sanatana Lakshmi (good fortune, health, age and prosperity), Veera Lakshmi (heroic) Lakshmi means Defense, Security), Vijaya Lakshmi (Digdiganta Vijay), Vidya Lakshmi (Knowledge, Knowledge, Art Science), these eight forms combine to form the festival of Goddess Mahalakshmi. Diwali means Festival of Lights. Wherever there is light of these eight forms, the spirit of Diwali definitely exists. Lakshmi's adobe is not restricted to a small unit. She resides everywhere. The richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor are entitled to the light and prosperity. This means that Lakshmi resides in mind. She is the confirmation of body, mind, wealth, family and children.

May this Dhanteras our prosperity be qualitative, but the new outlook that is flourishing in the

name of prosperity is not only fatal but also a serious sign of danger to human existence. Capitalism riding on the back of imperialism has increased the richness of the rich on one hand and on the other hand, poverty has also increased. The gap between richness and poverty is increasing rather than decreasing, as a result of which we can see the horrors of war, terrorism, communalism, which have the consequences of violence, hatred, malice in society, Greed, fierce competition, relationship cracks etc. Most impacts have emerged as environmental imbalances and pollution. Due to limited prosperity in a few hands, not only large and so-called affluent people, but a large section of the country has fallen victim to zero degeneration due to ill-humanism. Many evils came home without being called. Like world wars between Israel-Hamas and Russia and Ukraine. We created terrorism. Man-to-man has become insecure. Prohibitive rites such as violence, lies, theft, rape, collection have caught man. Not only the faces have lost their identity but also the character. The centers of policy and loyalty have begun to change. The foundations of faith have begun to weaken. The blind race of meaning connected the individual with collection, convenience, pleasure, luxury and selfishness. The problem that appeared was - less the substance, the more the consumer. Individualistic attitude awakened. In the struggle for selfishness, injustice and exploitation started happening. Everyone feels alone. Surely there is an error in our worship of our wealth and the worship that is being done to achieve it. Our attitude towards money is dissonant.

In this process, how is the true spirit of Diwali and Dhanteras celebrated? Because all the social beliefs, human values, dignities are being considered as the standard of success, whatever the amount of money collected, politics, literature, art, religion are all being weighed on the scales of money. This trend is leading to very dangerous results. Prosperity has been the dream of every era and has been included in the essentials of life. In a relative view, prosperity is not bad, but bad is the mindset in which some people are distinguished by the basic needs of a large number of people by virtue of their exploitation. Bad is that glorious display of prosperity that opens opportunities for crime to flourish. There is bitterness in the relationship between your loved ones, drawing the lines of distinction. There is more competition for collections than necessary. Uncontrolled demand and sensory incontinence has risen. Rituals of violence and attachment awaken. With prosperity, a person's habit, aptitude, aspiration, and many more are affected by upscale and taken the wrong direction. The person makes false appearances in the glare of fashion. Drinks, intoxicated by drugs. Breaks the dignity of food and drink. The so-called modern lifestyle of prosperity has led to a dislike for life values. The changing meaning of prosperity can become welfare only when character loyalty and morality are maintained along with prosperity. It is important to adopt pure means, so that the means obtained in the form of prosperity are used with the right goal in the right direction. Awaken the consciousness of immersion with the collection. Desire is substantive restraint, moderation along with enjoyment is also necessary. The changing patterns of prosperity give rise to formations, give creativity to the ideological outlook, and stop the evils that flourish with modernity, move forward by building faith and humanity. Where have you been safe today - with the ideal of prosperity reaching man with faith? Who moderates their facilities? Who does the immersion of goodness? Who is able to give restraint to selfishness? Even if we do not have a car or other luxuries we must have the ability of character qualities because on the strength of this ability, we can make ourselves super powerful, only then our Dhanteras will be meaningful.

international

EDITOR'S SPECS

Nitish Kumar announces plans to enhance reservation up to 75%

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, during the discussion on the caste survey in the Assembly on Tuesday, announced his government's intention to enhance reservation up to 75 per cent. At present, Bihar has 50 per cent reservation for OBC, EBC, SC and ST and he expressed his desire to enhance this up to 65 per cent while there would be 10 per cent reservation given to the upper castes people on the basis of their financial condition. Elaborating the current and future reservation policies of Bihar, Nitish Kumar said: "The Scheduled Caste people are availing 16 per cent reservation at present and as their population has increased here, it needs to enhance up to 20 per cent in Bihar. Similarly, 1 per cent reservation is given to the Scheduled Tribes and as their population has also increased, we have decided to enhance the reservation by 1 per cent more. With this, the formula of SC and ST will change to 20 and 2 per cent, respectively." He said that the state government is giving 35 per cent reservation to women of backward caste (OBC), so it need not to enhance it. He also said that the reservation of EBC needs to be enhanced more but the percentage is not finalised yet. He also said that the 10 per cent reservation for upper caste people on the basis of economic condition is also proposed.

IDF captures key Hamas stronghold in Gaza after 10 hour-long battle



Tel Aviv | Agencies

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Thursday said that it has captured a key stronghold of the Hamas militant group in the Gaza Strip after a 10-hour-long battle.

In a statement, the military said the Nahal Infantry Battalion captured the stronghold named as 'Outpost 17' in the Jebailiya region. The IDF further claimed that several Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants were killed in the fierce fighting.

The military said it also located a tunnel shaft adjacent to a kindergarten school that leads to an extensive underground route.

The fighting took place within the tunnel system as well as on the ground.

The military however, did not specify the number of casualties on the IDF's side.

This development comes as Israeli forces have intensified its ongoing ground offensive in Gaza against the Hamas in retaliation to its unprecedented attack on October 7.

40,000 people walked to southern Gaza since early Nov: UN

The UN Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) said that since the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) created periodic evacuation "corridors" earlier this month, at least 40,000 people have walked from northern Gaza to the besieged enclave's southern regions. The IDF has repeatedly called on civilians to move south of Wadi Gaza -- a waterway bisecting the center of the enclave -- as it intensifies its assault on Hamas in Gaza City and northern Gaza. The UNRWA said that UN monitors and NGOs are providing water and biscuits to evacuees just south of the Wadi Gaza. For a fifth consecutive day on Wednesday, the Israeli military opened the "corridor" along the main traffic artery, Salah Ad Deen Road, for residents to leave the north between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., which was then extended by an hour, as people were still moving southwards. It is estimated that about 50,000 people evacuated during the day, the largest number since the corridor opened, bringing the estimated figure since November 5 to 72,000. Most evacuees move on foot and those who use vehicles leave them at the southern edge of Gaza city at the Al Kuwaiti roundabout. The evacuees then walk 4-5 km down the corridor, with an estimated distance of up to 20 km for those traveling farthest, according to the UNRWA. Since the war broke out on October 7, about 1.5 million people in Gaza have been internally displaced, according to the UN agency. Of them, nearly 725,000 are sheltering in 149 UNRWA facilities; 122,000 in hospitals, churches and public buildings; 131,134 in 94 non-UNRWA schools, and the remainder with host families.

Democrats freak out as fresh polls show Trump leading Biden in five of six swing states

Washington | Agencies

President Joe Biden's popularity rating has plummeted to 39 per cent, close to his lowest of 36 per cent recorded in mid-2022 during his presidency, as his predecessor Donald Trump leads by narrow margins in five states, as per various polls. But majority of youth reject both as too old for the POTUS position and 76 per cent feel the country is headed in the wrong direction. Both Democratic and Republican candidates are being broadly viewed as unfavourable, an ABC/Ipsos poll indicated Biden's public approval rating is at 39 per cent has always been below the 50 per cent threshold mark, but this month's close to his lowest rating of 36 per cent seen in mid-2022, media reports said.

But the Democrats backed Biden, putting on a brave face and contesting poll predictions saying they often painted a dire picture for incumbent presidents a year before the election, and most voters are not tuned into the political agenda right now.

President Biden's re-election cam-



ampaign remains full-speed ahead. His campaign managers said Biden turns 81-years-old on November 20. His age is a major concern for voters as they doubt his cognitive functions to make the right decisions for the American people in the White House. It's the same for the brash Trump, who is 77-years-old.

IS THERE A PLAN B, but it's too late change horses right now, pollsters say.

The filing deadline for presidential state primaries in Nevada, New Hampshire and South Carolina have lapsed meaning it's too late to get new names on the ballots.

The only official elected Democrat running against Biden is Minnesota businessman Representative Dean

Phillips, who was first elected to Congress in 2018. Phillips announced his candidacy for 2024 presidency in late October, stating his belief that Biden cannot win the re-election. But a poll released last week shows Phillips with only four per cent of support among potential Democratic primary voters, the same as motivational speaker, Marianne Williamson, who's still in the race. The Kennedy family member Robert Jr. offers a glimmer of hope for Democrats promising to take away voters from Trump rather than Biden as an independent candidate. Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. appears to take more support from Trump than Biden, a new poll found. In a head-to-head match-up the poll found Biden narrowly ahead of Trump by one point -- 47 to 46 per cent, taking into account the margin of error.

But with Kennedy in a three-way race, Biden is ahead with 39 per cent to Trump's 36 per cent and Kennedy's 22 per cent. Donor data shows Kennedy pulling more from past Trump supporters rather than Biden's.

Israeli attack targets military positions near Syrian capital: War monitor

Damascus | Agencies

Three explosions reverberated across the Syrian capital of Damascus, which appeared to be Israeli strikes targeting military sites nearby, according to a war monitor.

The fresh Israeli attack targeted the Aqraba orchards in the countryside of Damascus, where a military air base is located, just 13 km west of the international airport of Damascus, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights on Wednesday.

The strikes also hit a radar station southwest of Damascus, the observatory added.

The Syrian air defences



were triggered and have attempted to thwart the Israeli attack, according to the UK-based watchdog group.

As more details emerge, the pro-government Sham

FM radio said the explosions were heard south of Damascus and in the southern province of Sweida, noting that the causes of the explosions are not yet known, Xinhua news agency report-

ed. Israel has escalated its ground and air strikes on Syria significantly since the start of the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza on October 7, said the observatory.

Airstrikes, attributed to Israel, have hit Aleppo and Damascus airports several times in the past month.

In addition, Israel said it had responded with artillery, mortar and airstrikes toward Syria in response to a number of launches from Syria toward Israeli sites on the occupied Syrian Golan, said UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen days ago when briefing the UN Security Council of the development in Syria.

Quito | Agencies

Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso said the police and military jointly raided the country's largest prison, the Litoral Penitentiary in Guayaquil, two days after inmates belonging to rival organized crime rings clashed, leaving two injured. "Military and police personnel are searching for weapons, ammunition, explosives and banned items inside this center," Lasso said in a post on X on Tuesday evening. He added that the raids will continue "until the last day of my administration as a way to confront corruption in the system and disarm the criminal organi-



zations that operate within the centers". He added that the country "must remain firm in its objective of controlling violence in prisons and on the streets". In the last three months, Armed Forces and National Police personnel have regularly searched prisons as part of a state of emergency decreed by the government for the entire penitentiary system, following a massacre at the Litoral

Penitentiary that left 31 inmates dead in July. Under the state of emergency, soldiers or police officers are allowed to enter prisons to seize weapons and other banned items in coordination with the national prison administration agency. Wednesday's raid aimed to "maintain order and security at the prison", the Armed Forces said on social media. The Litoral Penitentiary, which houses some 5,600 inmates, has been the scene of constant clashes between rival gangs linked to drug trafficking. Since February 2021, more than 400 inmates have been killed, according to official data.

7 people killed, including migrants, in car crash in Texas

Houston | Agencies

At least seven people, including four migrants and a suspected smuggler, were killed in a car crash near Batesville, US state of Texas, authorities said. Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) troopers confirmed several of the dead were from Honduras, reported local media outlet KENS 5, which is based in San Antonio, on Wednesday. DPS said a Honda driver who was evading arrest from the Zavala County Sheriff's Office passed an 18-wheeler in a no-passing zone and then drove head-on into a Chevy SUV, killing the SUV driver and passenger, who were from Georgia, Xinhua news agency reported. Authorities said five passengers in the Honda, including the suspected smuggler, were killed in the crash. An investigation is underway.



"CONGRESS AAYI, TABAHI LAAYI": PM MODI AT SATNA ELECTION RALLY

Team Absolute | Satna

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday launched a fresh attack on Congress in poll-bound Madhya Pradesh stating that the party had brought with it destruction when it came to power in the State. Addressing a rally in Satna, PM Modi said "Congress aayi, tabahi laayi (Congress came, brought with it destruction)".

The Prime Minister further said that Congress has no roadmap for the development of Madhya Pradesh, and people have faith in Modi's guarantees.

"Congress has no roadmap for the development of Madhya Pradesh. The youth of the state see no future in Congress. The state has faith in the guarantees given by Modi. Har guarantee ki poori hone ki guarantee," he said.

Urging people in the state to vote for BJP, he said, "Your one vote has done wonders that the country's enemies have lost their courage. Your MP's one vote will strengthen Modi in Delhi. Your one vote will oust corrupt Congress from MP."

He further said that if the Congress is voted to power "free ration and free health treatment will stop."

"The Congress at the Centre had created hurdles in the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh, which was not permitted to work. Congress had pushed Madhya Pradesh into the dark well here and BJP has tried to take it out. Now is



the time for sabka vikas (development of everyone). Dalit, backwards, tribal, poor, everyone will get their rights," the Prime Minister said.

PM Modi further emphasized that in the past 10 years, the government had built four crore houses for the people. "We build Ram temple with the same devotion with which we build 4 crore houses. This is Modi's guarantee to all those who have not yet got a house, they will get a house," he said.

Madhya Pradesh is one of the five states set to undergo polls in one phase on November 17 and counting of votes will take place on December 3.

"Where did all this money go in the Congress government? It went in the 2G

scam, it went in the coal scam, it went in the Commonwealth scam but I stopped all these scams. In 10 years, the BJP has sent ₹ 10 lakh crore to the accounts of the poor. It is unfortunate for Congress that you have given power to a watchman. We started the scheme of giving free ration during the Corona period. This scheme will be completed in December. People have suggested that it should be extended, so I decided that I will run this scheme for another five years. This will end the ration worries of 4 lakh families of Satna district," PM Modi said.

On November 17, voters will choose legislators from 230 Assembly constituencies of the state.

MP is full of corruption, scams: Priyanka

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday said the BJP has turned Madhya Pradesh into a laboratory and the state is full of corruption and scams.

The Congress leader said the people of Madhya Pradesh supported BJP for 18 years but in return they only got scams, corruption and unemployment; and has also ruined the future of youth.

Priyanka, while addressing a poll rally in Rewa district of Vindhya, hit out at Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan asserting that the later did not feel women's pain for 18 years and when he realised that he would be thrown out of power, he announced 'ladi behna yojana' for the sake of vote.

She said if Chief Minister Chouhan was really a brother of 'behnas' (sisters), he should have started giving cash incentives to the women years before. People supported him for years, but he cheated them with fake promises.

"People say Madhya Pradesh is RSS and BJP's laboratory, but did people get in return? They got corruption, scams and unemployment. This is what the BJP gave the people of Madhya Pradesh," Priyanka said, requesting people to vote for the Congress on November 17.

The BJP has bagged all eight assembly seats of Rewa in 2018, and is eyeing to repeat the result again. However, the Congress has fielded candidates keeping the caste equation in mind.

Before addressing in Rewa, Priyanka had addressed a poll rally in Chitrakoot



assembly of Satna district where she attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing him of affecting the future of youths by selling all government industries to his close industrialists.

"He calls himself a fakir, but he sold out all government industries to his close friend. Instead, he alleges that Congress has done nothing for the country. If the Congress did nothing, then what are you selling?" she asked. She said that instead of making the

politicians responsible for their duties, the people have started treating the Prime Minister as 'god'.

"You have set a wrong precedent by treating the PM as 'god'. Earlier, people used to criticise a leader without keeping his stature in mind. I used to go with my father (Rajiv Gandhi) and people used to scold him if commitments were not fulfilled. Today, the people treat the PM like a 'god'. You have to change this attitude," she added.

Congress's strategy to woo OBCs in Madhya Pradesh

Team Absolute | Bhopal

In Madhya Pradesh, while on one hand the Congress has resorted to caste census to woo the voters of Other Backward Classes, on the other hand it has also activated the leaders belonging to this class in the field.

Elections are to be held on 230 assembly seats in the state and victory on 116 seats is necessary to form the government. Congress is leaving no stone unturned to woo the largest population, OBCs, to gain majority. This is the reason why Congress has fielded about 27 percent i.e. around 60 candidates from this category. So, such leaders have also been activated who have influence in this class.

OBC class has a lot of influence in the politics of the state and is also in a decisive position in the elections. Vindhya and Bundelkhand are the areas of the state where voters of this category are capable of directly changing the elec-



tion results. This was the reason why Congress sent OBC net Rajmani Patel, who belonged to Vindhya region, to Rajya Sabha. The party has now engaged leaders of this class in election campaign work also.

The party has sent Sadhana Bharti, who belongs to the Lodhi community, to campaign in the Bundelkhand region. Angered by her name not being in the party's star campaigner list, Bharti had refused to campaign. Ultimately, the state leadership entrusted her with the responsibility of campaigning and apart from Deori,

she also reached Bada Malhara to campaign.

Apart from this, the party has also made OBC leader and State Organization General Secretary Pawan Patel active in this area and has entrusted him with the responsibility. Political analysts believe that there are many parts of the state where OBC voters are decisive and are in a position to directly influence the results.

Therefore, Congress has activated leaders belonging to this class who are capable of preparing voters in favor of Congress, if this happens then Congress seems to be benefiting.

HIGH COURT'S NOTICE TO THE GOVERNMENT REGARDING EMPLOYEES' SALARIES

Bhopal: For not giving the benefit of minimum pay scale of regular pay scale to permanent employees and daily wage employees, Justice JS Ahluwalia of Single Division of High Court, Jabalpur issued a notice to the Commissioner, Urban Administration Department, Commissioner, Treasury and Accounts, Principal Secretary, Public Works Department of Madhya Pradesh Government. Reply has been sought within the time limit. State President of Madhya Pradesh Employees Forum, Ashok Pandey, said in the press release that Amrutal Kori, working in the Public Works Department, and Rajkumar Tiwari, working in the Municipal Corporation, filed a petition in the High Court, Jabalpur, demanding the benefit of minimum pay scale in addition to the regular pay scale. Through the petition, permanent employees and daily wage employees have informed the High Court that the Supreme Court, while rejecting the petition of the State of Punjab, has given regularized permanent employees and daily wage employees equal pay for equal work after 10 years of service. An order has been passed to give the benefit of minimum pay scale of regular pay scale on the principle. Following the above order of the Supreme Court, permanent employees and daily wage employees of Madhya Pradesh should also be given the benefit of minimum pay scale of regular pay scale after 10 years of service. In Madhya Pradesh, permanent employees and daily wage employees should be given the benefit of 20 to 25 Despite years of service, in compliance with the order of the Supreme Court, officers in the departments are not giving the benefit of minimum salary of the regular pay scale on the basis of equal pay for equal work. While the permanent employees and daily wage employees are also paying the same taxes as the regular employees, yet the officials are violating the rights of the permanent employees and daily wage employees.

The permanent employees and daily wage employees have been paying minimum of the regular pay scale for a long time. They are requesting the Madhya Pradesh government to pay their salaries.

Tomarji's son is corrupt, BJP leader urinated on tribal youth

Team Absolute | Ashoknagar

Congress's star campaigner Rahul Gandhi, while addressing a public meeting in MP's Shoknagar today, took on BJP. He said that BJP leaders urinate on tribals and saw a leader urinating on the face of a tribal youth. Referring to Narendra Singh Tomar's son, Rahul Gandhi said that Tomarji's son is corrupt. A video of his transaction worth crores of rupees had surfaced.

Rahul also said that I tell Modi to conduct caste census. But Narendra Modi says there is no caste. Rahul said in the election rally in Naisarai, Ashoknagar that in Bharat Jodo Yatra, he walked 4000 kilometers from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, met farmers, youth, mothers and sisters and saw the country very closely. This trip changed me. 90 people run the government of India. If you think that MP-MLAs run the government then you are wrong. If we want to fight unemployment, the first step is caste census. Which I call X-ray of the country. Rahul Gandhi,



while replying to PM Modi while talking about OBCs, said that Modi had said two-three days ago - there is only one caste in India, that is the poor. On one hand they say I am OBC. If India's budget is Rs 100, OBCs take a decision of Rs 5.

Attacking the Central Government on GST and crop insurance, Rahul said that Rs 30 thousand crores were given to 16 companies. This money was yours for crop insurance and GST. This was given to such companies in which there is neither a

tribal, nor an OBC, nor a Dalit. He said that when you ask for insurance money, the companies refuse. When you mail, they say no harm has been done to you.

Rahul said in the public meeting that you have the right on water, forest and land. Narendra Modi says that Congress party does not help the poor. We brought MNREGA, we brought Right to Food, we brought Land Tribunal, we brought PESA law. Tell me one scheme which he brought for the poor.

Sant Hirdaram Girls College Hosts Model G20 Summit

Team Absolute | Bhopal

On Thursday, the Literary Committee and NSS unit of Sant Hirdaram Girls College proudly organized the prestigious Model G20 Summit, setting a remarkable stage for insightful discussions and innovative solutions. The event was graced by esteemed personalities, including the Principal Dr. Dalima Parwani, NSS PO'S, Dr. Neha Gupta, Coordinator of Literary Committee, distinguished alumni, participants from various colleges, dedicated faculty members, and enthusiastic students.

The event commenced with a warm welcome by Dr. Dalima Parwani, who emphasized the significance of global cooperation and encouraged the delegates to actively engage in constructive dialogues. In her opening address, she highlighted the importance of the summit's theme - "Transitioning to a Sustainable World" and "Future of Work," underscoring the urgent need



for collaborative efforts in addressing these critical issues.

The summit saw vibrant discussions led by 20 delegates, Alumni and guest speakers, who passionately debated various topics, delving deep into the challenges and opportunities our world faces today. From environmental sustainability to the evolving landscape of work, the speakers shared their profound insights, fostering an atmosphere of intellectual exchange.

The highlight of the evening was

the recognition of outstanding contributions. Noreen Fatima was honored with the title of Best Guest Speaker, impressing the audience with her eloquence and depth of knowledge. Rasha Hashmi received the accolade of Best Speaker for her articulate presentation, captivating the audience with her persuasive oratory. The coveted title of Best Delegate was awarded to Princi Pahlwani, recognizing her exceptional diplomacy and leadership skills. Dr. Neha Gupta, the coordinator of

the Literary Committee, expressed heartfelt gratitude in her vote of thanks, acknowledging the efforts of all participants, organizers, and attendees who made the summit a resounding success. She underscored the importance of such platforms in nurturing the leaders of tomorrow, who will play a pivotal role in shaping a sustainable and prosperous future.

The College Management extended their sincere appreciation to the Literary Committee and NSS unit for their commendable efforts in organizing this enlightening event. Their dedication and passion were evident, creating an inspiring environment for intellectual growth and collaboration.

As the event concluded, participants left with a sense of fulfillment, carrying the knowledge and inspiration gained from the Model G20 Summit. Sant Hirdaram Girls College looks forward to hosting more such impactful events, fostering a culture of dialogue, innovation, and global understanding among its students and the wider community.

Income Tax search & seizure operation at offices, factories of Som Distilleries

Team Absolute | Bhopal

Som Distilleries and Breweries said that a search and seizure operation by the Income Tax Department at the Company's Corporate office and Factories of the Company was being conducted since November 7.

"The Company has been cooperating with the officials during the proceedings and responded to the clarifications and details sought by them," it said.

"The business operations of the Company continue as usual and have not been impacted due to the search. We will comply with our legal obligation for disclosure from time to time and will update you on further developments in near future as and when the situation permits. This may also be treated as price sensitive information as per Securities and Exchange Board of India (Prohibition of Insider Trading) Regulations, 2015," the company said. The company's corporate office is



in Bhopal while the registered office is in Delhi. Som Distilleries and Breweries share price dropped by 4.3 per cent at Rs 286 on BSE on Thursday.

The company recently unveiled a strategic contract manufacturing agreement in Jammu and Kashmir for the manufacture of IMFL.

The company said, "This will further fortify our commitment to delivering high quality products to the Canteen Stores Department (CSD)." "This will also lead to a shorter turnaround time for the supply of our products to the northern and border regions of the country," the company said.

727 out of 2,534 candidates in MP crorepatis, up by 5% as compared to 656 out of 2,716 in 2018 polls: Report

Team Absolute | New Delhi/Bhopal

Out of the 2,534 candidates in the fray in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly elections this year, 727, which is 29 per cent are crorepatis. This is up by five per cent as compared to 656 (24 per cent) out of the 2,716 candidates analysed in the 2018 elections, a report stated on Thursday.

The report has been prepared by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Madhya Pradesh Election Watch which analysed the self-sworn affidavits of all 2,534 candidates, who are contesting in the Madhya

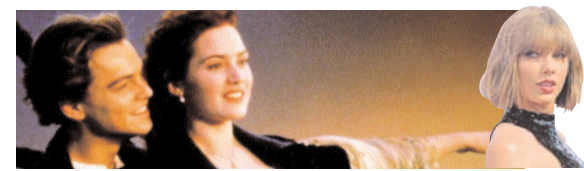
Pradesh 2023 Assembly Elections. The report said, "Out of the 2,534 candidates analysed, 727 are crorepatis. In 2018 Madhya Pradesh Assembly Elections, out of 2,716 candidates, 656 were crorepatis."

The report further said that there were 265 candidates i.e. 10 per cent of the 2,534 with assets more than Rs 5 crore, 250 candidates, which is 10 per cent with assets between Rs 2 to Rs 5 crore, 506 candidates, which is 20 per cent, having assets between Rs 50 lakh to Rs 2 crore, 683 candidates which is 27 per cent with assets more than Rs 10 lakh to Rs 50 lakh and 830 candidates with assets up to Rs 10 lakh.

The report highlighted that the role of money power in elections is evident from the fact that all major political parties give tickets to wealthy candidates.

"Among the major parties 200 (87 per cent) out of 230 candidates analysed from the BJP, 196 (85 per cent) out of 230 candidates analysed from the Congress, 39 (59 per cent) out of 66 candidates analysed from the AAP and 54 (30 per cent) out of 181 candidates analysed from the BSP have declared assets valued at more than Rs 1 crore," the report said. Polling for the 230-member Madhya Pradesh Assembly is scheduled on November 17 and the counting of votes will take place on December 3.





Aubrey Plaza

Reveals she's living with Patti LuPone ahead of stage debut

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress-comedian Aubrey Plaza got a new roommate to make sure her onstage debut was a success.

The 'Parks and Recreation' alum, 39, revealed in an interview with *Vulture* that she's currently living with three-time Tony Award winner Patti LuPone, reports 'People' magazine. Plaza told the outlet that her 'Agatha: Darkhold Diaries' co-star, 74, has been helping her adjust to her role in the Off-Broadway revival of *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea* by making her soup and doing her laundry.

"She insisted. She's trying to whip me into shape," Plaza told the outlet, quoted by 'People'. The Broadway

veteran has also been teaching Plaza some valuable life lessons. The *White Lotus* actress recalled a conversation she had with LuPone after getting strep throat shortly before rehearsals started.

"I was like, 'Why is this happening?'" Plaza recalled saying. "Patti went, 'It's happening because you have to toughen up'". Plaza announced her casting in an Instagram post in July. "Couldn't be in better hands for my first time on stage... and timing couldn't be stranger... oh well here we go. 10 weeks only. this fall in the west village", she wrote in the caption. The comment section was filled with messages of support from individuals like Vanessa Hudgens who wrote, "Dopeee. Great play."

The play was written by John Patrick Shanley and is currently playing at the Lucille Lortel Theatre in New York City. Plaza portrays Roberta opposite Christopher Abbott, who stars as Danny.



Los Angeles | Agencies

Hollywood star Tom Hardy's 'Venom 3' has pushed its release to November 8, 2024. The announcement came the same day that SAG-AFTRA approved a tentative deal to end the 118-day actors strike.

The third installment of the 'Venom' series, which is untitled at this time, was originally set for a July 12, 2024, release date. Kelly Marcel, who wrote and produced the first two 'Venom' movies, directs the upcoming superhero film from a screenplay she wrote, reports *Variety*.

Marcel and Hardy developed the story of 'Venom 3' and produced alongside Avi Arad, Matt Tolmach, Amy Pascal

and Hutch Parker.

Hardy's previous two comic book tentpoles, 2018's 'Venom' and 2021's 'Venom: Let There Be Carnage' both opened at the start of October.

As per *Variety*, the first 'Venom' film, directed by Ruben Fleischer, grossed \$856 million at the worldwide box office, while the Andy Serkis-directed 'Let There Be Carnage' took a drop amid the pandemic but still earned \$502 million worldwide. Notably, 'Let There Be

Tom Hardy-starrer 'Venom 3' defers its release to Nov 2024



'Carnage' debuted to \$90 million in the U.S. compared to 'Venom's' \$80 million debut during non-pandemic times.

Sony confirmed that a third movie in the Tom Hardy-led franchise was moving forward during CinemaCon in 2022. Aside from Hardy's return as the lethal protector Venom, the plot of the film has been kept under wraps.

Hardy's Eddie Brock and Venom last appeared in a credits sequence in 2021's 'Spider-Man: No Way Home', but it's unclear which of Sony's Universe of Marvel Characters - one that includes Morbius, Kraven the Hunter and Madame Web, among others - might show up in 'Venom 3'.

Kim Kardashian vows to remain single after internal conflicts over possible marriage

Los Angeles | Agencies

Reality TV star and actress Kim Kardashian has vowed to remain single after a lot of internal struggles over another possible marriage.

On the latest episode of 'The Kardashians', Kim, 43, detailed her plans to date and possibly marry again, though she doesn't see it happening anytime soon.

The topic came up as Kim was jetting off to Las Vegas with her hairstylist Chris Appleton and his then-fiance Lukas Gage for their wedding, according to 'People' magazine.

"So you think you've got one more wedding inside

you?" Chris, 40, asked Kim, to which she responded, "I don't know, I think I go back and forth."

Referring to her state of mind upon being single, the hairstylist said: "This is the best you've ever been."

He added: "You look amazing, you're in control of everything, you have the kids down, the business down, and I don't know, I just feel like you're in a good place, happy."

Giving a candid reply, Kim said that she is "in a calm place" as of now, adding: "So maybe that's when it's good to invite energy in." In a confessional interview, a producer asked Kim where she was in her "two years of wanting to be single." The reality star appeared confused at first, asking, "When did I say that?" But when the producer clarified that she made the remark "probably a year" ago, Kim expressed her approval.

Sharon Stone recollects when studio executive held his genitals in front of her

Los Angeles | Agencies

Actress Sharon Stone recently appeared on Kelly Ripa's podcast 'Let's Talk Off Camera' in which she disclosed for the first time one of her experiences combating sexual harassment in Hollywood.

She said that a former head of Sony exposed his p**** to her when she went to his office for a general meeting in the 1980s, long before films like 'Basic Instinct' and 'Casino' made her an international star, reports 'Variety'. The actress did not name the former executive. She remembered being "so excited" to "wear a special outfit" and "to meet the head of Sony." She wore a "Ralph Lauren jacket with the little ruffle on the shoulder" and a "denim skirt with a big ruffle at the bottom," plus cowboy boots.

"I went to his office and it was, you know, back in the eighties, so the couch was basically on the floor, you know?" Stone told Ripa, quoted by 'Variety'. "It was those very low giant couches and my knees were around my neck and of course, I'm so tall anyway, so I look like all legs sitting there akimbo on the couch, and he is pacing around the office and he's doing the exact same thing."

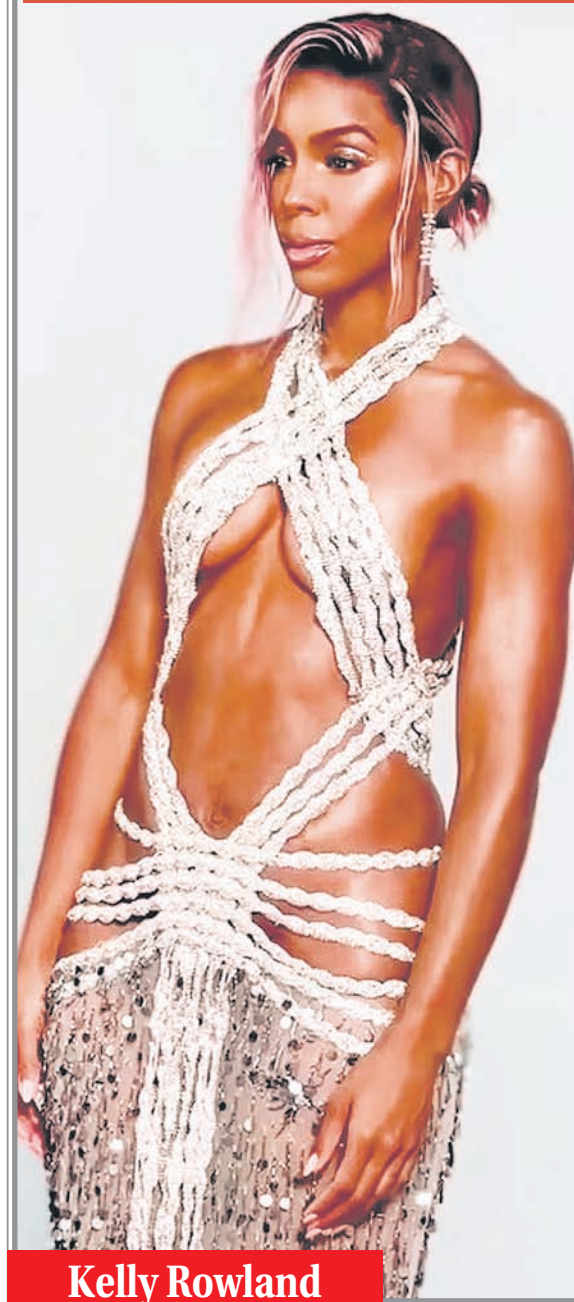


Stone said the Sony boss told her: "Oh, it's true what they say about you and you're the most gorgeous. We haven't seen anyone like you in decades. Everybody's talking about you and look at you. You're the most articulate. You're so smart and beautiful and that hair."

She added, "Then he came walking right up in front of me and he said, 'But first...' and he took his p**** right out in my face," Stone said.

"Of course I was very young and what I do when I'm nervous, because I'm basically a very bubbly person, I started laughing. I started laughing and crying at the same time and I couldn't stop because I became hysterical. I couldn't stop, so he didn't know what to do. So, of course, he put it away and he went through this door behind his desk, which I thought was that he left, so I didn't know what to do."

ABSOLUTE PIC OF THE DAY



Kelly Rowland

Zac Efron would be 'honoured' to play 'mentor' Matthew Perry in biopic



Los Angeles | Agencies

Actor Zac Efron would be "honoured" to play the late Matthew Perry, whom he calls his "mentor", on the big screen.

The 'Greatest Showman' star graciously responded after the 'Friends' actor reportedly expressed his desire to have Efron portray him in a biopic of his life.

"I'm honoured to hear he was thinking of me to play him," he told *People* at the premiere of his film 'The Iron Claw' on Wednesday, reports *pagesix.com*.

"We'll see. I'd be honoured to do it." Efron also grieved his '17 Again' co-star, sharing that he is "devastated" by Perry's death.

"He was a mentor to me, and we made a really cool film together," he said.

"I looked up to him, I learned comedic timing from that guy, I mean, when we were filming '17 Again' it was so surreal

for me to look across and have him be there, because I've learned so much from him, from his whole life."

In the 2009 film, Efron plays the younger version of Perry's character, Mike O'Donnell. Perry's friend Athena Crosby, who was one of the last people seen with him before he died on October 28, previously revealed that he wanted the 'High School Musical' actor, 36, to star in his movie.

She added that Perry was "enthusiastic" about the film and optimistic about life before he was found dead from an apparent drowning at his home in Los Angeles. He was 54.

Perry was laid to rest in a private section at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Hollywood Hills, California on November 3. His funeral was attended by his 'Friends' co-stars Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Matt LeBlanc, David Schwimmer and Lisa Kudrow.



Men's ODI WC

BOWLERS SET UP NEW ZEALAND'S 5-WICKET WIN OVER SL; VIRTUALLY SEAL SEMIS SPOT

Bengaluru | Agencies

New Zealand survived a minor scare before surging to a five-wicket victory over Sri Lanka with 160 balls to spare, all but grabbing the fourth and last place in the semifinals of the ICC Men's ODI World Cup 2023 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Thursday.

New Zealand, who needed to win their last league match by a big margin to further improve their Net Run Rate, bundled out Sri Lanka for 171 and were cruising towards victory at 86 for no loss in 12 overs as Devon Conway (45) and Rachin Ravindra (42) came out firing on all cylinders.

Both the openers were out in quick succession and skipper Kane Williamson departed for 14 before Daryl Mitchell blasted a 31-ball 43 to put them back on track for a five-wicket victory.

It was an incredible bowling performance followed by an 86-run opening stand that built the base for New Zealand's important victory over Sri Lanka at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru.

The victory has left Pakistan and Afghanistan, both of whom are on eight points, needing virtually impossible targets to achieve in their respective last-league matches to overcome New Zealand's superior NRR. To deny them and reach the



semis, Pakistan need to beat England either by 287 runs while batting first or with about 284 balls to spare while chasing. It is even more improbable for Afghanistan as they need to beat the second-placed South Africa, already in the semis, by 438 to sur-

pass New Zealand's NRR. It was the New Zealand quicks who made things possible for the Black Caps as they ran amok in Bengaluru. Kusal Perera stood out as the lone warrior in the Powerplay for Sri Lanka even as four of his mates perished in

quick succession to some quality bowling from the Kiwis' new-ball bowlers.

Sri Lanka's hopes of Perera salvaging them from the ruckus fell in the Powerplay itself when Lockie Ferguson snared him with the left-hander attempting a big hit over the off-side. Reduced to 70/5, Sri Lanka needed the experience of Angelo Mathews and Dhananjaya de Silva to save them, but Mitchell Santner stepped in, sending back the duo in successive overs to put the Black Caps well and truly on top. They eventually ambled along to 171, but New Zealand's rousing start with the bat all but sealed the contest.

Chasing 172, New Zealand made a strong start in the Powerplay as Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra came up with determined efforts.

Brief scores:

Sri Lanka 171 all out in 46.4 overs (Kusal Perera 51, Maheesh Theekshana 38 not out; Trent Boult 3-37, Lokie Ferguson 2-35, Mitchell Santner 2-22, Rachin Ravindra 2-21) lost to New Zealand 172/5 in 23.2 overs (Devon Conway 45, Rachin Ravindra 42, Daryl Mitchell 43; Angelo Mathews 2-29) by five wickets.

Asian Archery C'ships

Parneet edges out Jyothi for gold; India finishes campaign with 7 medals

Bangkok | Agencies

Eighteen-year-old Parneet Kaur got the better of the seasoned archer Jyothi Surekha Vennam to win the gold medal in the women's compound individual event at the Asian Archery Championships 2023, here on Thursday.

According to information received, Parneet defeated Jyothi 9-8 in the shoot-off after both the archers were tied at 145 at the end of five sets.

Parneet, who finished fourth in the qualifying round, earlier defeated Kazakhstan's Iyan Viktoriya 147-145 semifinals while Jyothi beat Huang I-Jou of Chinese Taipei's 148-145 to set up an all-Indian final.

Reigning double World Archery Champion Aditi Gopichand Swami topped the qualification but suffered an upset in the third round.

However, the trio of Parneet, Jyothi and Aditi clinched the gold medal in the women's compound team event with a 234-233 win over Chinese Taipei's Wang Lu-Yun, Chen Yi Hsuan, Huang I-Jou in the final. Aditi also clinched the



gold medal in the mixed compound team event alongside U21 world champion Priyansh. The Indian duo secured victory by defeating Thailand's Kanoknapus Kaewchomphu and Lertruangsilp Nawayut with a score of 156-151 in the thrilling gold medal match. In the men's compound event, Abhishek Verma, the Asian Games 2023 silver medallist, settled with the bronze medal. He registered a narrow 147-146 win over Joo Jaehoon of South Korea in the bronze medal contest after losing the semifinal to Andrey Tyutyunov of Kazakhstan. India won five medals on Thursday, taking the final medal tally to seven -- including three gold, one silver and three bronze at the Asian championships.

Earlier in the tournament, Indian women's recurve and men's compound teams won bronze medals on Wednesday. Asian Archery Championships 2023 was also an Olympic qualifier for Indian recurve archers with gold medal-winning team per gender earning the Paris 2024 Olympics quotas in archery.

India failed to secure any quota places as both men's and women's recurve teams failed to win gold medals. The Asian Archery Championships will be followed by the Asian individual Olympic qualifiers for archery at the same venue, from November 9 to 12.

The individual qualifiers will have two Olympic quotas (one per country) on offer in each of the men's and women's recurve archery events.

I-League 2023-24

Shillong Lajong held by NEROCA in season's first home game

Shillong | Agencies

Shillong Lajong FC earned a point on I-League's return to the Meghalaya capital after a gap of four seasons, holding fellow North-Eastern side NEROCA FC to a 1-1 draw at the SSA Stadium on Thursday.

Lajong, who had also drawn 1-1 with Mohammedan Sporting in Naihati last week, took the lead through their Brazilian midfielder Renan Paulino in the 34th minute. A capacity crowd showed up for the weekday afternoon kick-off in the heart of Shillong, and they were treated to a solid first half from the home side. However, NEROCA bounced back in the second half, equalising through Jamaican striker Fabian Reid



in the 79th minute. The Orange Brigade, who had leaked as many as eight goals in their first two trips to Sreenidi Deccan and Gokulam Kerala, finally got off the mark this season with a valuable point.

As a result, both Shillong Lajong and NEROCA climbed a couple of places on the table. Bobby

Nongbet's Lajong are now 9th with two points from as many games, while NEROCA lifted themselves off the foot of the table to move to 11th.

Shillong Lajong will next welcome Sreenidi Deccan on November 14, and NEROCA take on Aizawl on the same day in their first home game of the season in Kalyani.

Champions League

BAYERN DOWN STUBBORN GALATASARAY TO MAINTAIN PERFECT RECORD

Berlin | Agencies

Harry Kane's late brace helped Bayern Munich to secure their passage into the Champions League knockout stages after clinching their fourth victory in as many games in Group A with a 2-1 victory over Galatasaray.

Galatasaray began strongly and nearly opened the scoring just three minutes



into the match when Mauro Icardi chipped the ball into the arms of Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer from an off-side position, reports Xinhua. The Bavarians then took control and kept Galatasaray's defense on their toes, with Kane and Leroy Sane forcing goalkeeper Fernando Muslera into action twice. The

visitors remained a threat and believed they had taken the lead against the run of play, but Lucas Torreira's goal was disallowed due to an earlier offside decision at the hour mark. With the result, Bayern sit atop the standings in Group A, followed by Copenhagen, Galatasaray, and Manchester United.

MAN UTD EDGED OUT IN SEVEN-GOAL THRILLER AGAINST COPENHAGEN

Copenhagen (Denmark): Manchester United were dealt a major blow to their UEFA Champions League hopes as they fell to an agonising 3-4 defeat against Copenhagen.

Manchester United now face a tall order in reaching the last 16 of the Champions League as they sit bottom of Group A with only two matches to spare, and will be eliminated from the competition if they lose to Galatasaray in three weeks' time. United made a dream start on Wednesday night as Rasmus Hojlund helped the visitors take control inside the opening 28 minutes. Hojlund struck in the third minute following good build-up play from Marcus Rashford and Aaron Wan-Bissaka. He claimed his second after Alejandro Garnacho's initial effort was parried by Copenhagen goalkeeper Kamil Grabara. Hojlund becomes the first Man Utd player to score five goals in his first four appearances in the Champions League. In the 87th minute Copenhagen went in front for the first time in the evening as Rooney Bardghji, aged 17 years and 358 days, became the youngest player to score against Man Utd in the Champions League.

Australia captain Meg Lanning announces retirement from international cricket

Melbourne | Agencies

Australian women's cricket team captain Meg Lanning has announced her retirement from international cricket at the age of 31, nearly 13 years after making her debut.

Lanning will continue to play in domestic competitions, including the Women's Big Bash League and the Women's National Cricket League.

No captain in the history of cricket has lifted more World Cup trophies than Lanning, who retires as one of Australia's most successful leaders. She captained Australia on 182 occasions, more than any other women's player, and led the team to a historic five World Cup crowns.

The Australian women's team had an 80% win rate under Lanning's captaincy and set the world record for consecutive wins in ODI cricket (26) between 2018 and 2021.

The seven-time World Cup winner and three-



time Belinda Clark medallist amassed 8,352 runs from 241 international matches. The top-order batter scored 17 centuries across her international career.

Speaking on her retirement, Lanning said: "The decision to step away from international cricket was a difficult one to make, but I feel now is the right time for me. I've been incredibly fortunate to enjoy a 13-year international career, but I know now is the right time for me to move on to something new." Team success is why you play the game, I'm proud of what I have been able to achieve and will cherish the moments shared with teammates along the way."

She made her international debut on December 30, 2010, in a T20I against New Zealand and became the youngest Australian to score a century when she scored 104 not out against England at the WACA Ground aged 18 years and 288 days. It was just her third match and second ODI.

Virat Kohli is proving his status as one of the all-time greats: Sir Viv Richards

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Legendary West Indies batter Sir Viv Richards has been left in awe of Virat Kohli's performances in the 2023 Men's ODI World Cup, saying the talismanic India batter is proving his status as one of the all-time batting greats alongside Sachin Tendulkar.

At the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, Kohli equalled Tendulkar's record of 49 ODI centuries with a brilliant 101 not out against South Africa on his 35th birthday, as India won by 243 runs to keep its winning run going. Kohli now has a total of 543 runs at this edition of the Men's ODI World Cup at a gigantic average of 108.60.

"There have been a whole host of talented individuals on show but to top them all, you cannot look past Virat Kohli. I am a huge fan of Virat, I have been for a long time, and he continues to show why he has to go down as



one of the all-time greats, right up there with the likes of the great Sachin. Virat will have been through some tough times before this World Cup and some folks were even brave enough to call for his head," wrote Richards in his column for the ICC. He also credited the Indian team support staff for supporting Kohli through his phase of having a lean run with the bat, while applauding the right-handed batter's mental tenacity.

Kusal Perera slams fastest fifty against NZ

Bengaluru | Agencies

Kusal Perera on Thursday smashed the fastest half-century of the ongoing ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 during Sri Lanka's match against New Zealand at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Thursday.

Perera reached his fifty off 22 balls and also scored the joint-second fastest half-century by a Sri Lankan in World Cup history.

Angelow Mathews' 20-ball fifty against Scotland in 2015 is the fastest by a Sri Lankan. Dinesh Chandimal is the other Sri Lankan to score a 22-ball World Cup fifty.

Before Perera Australia's



Travis Head and Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis held the record for the fastest fifties in the ongoing tournament. They scored their fifties off 25 balls against New Zealand and South Africa, respectively.

However, Perera was eventually dismissed by Lockie Ferguson for a 28-ball 51, which included nine fours and two sixes.

I want Pakistan to reach the semi-finals and play India, says Sourav Ganguly

Team Absolute | New Delhi

Former Indian cricketer Sourav Ganguly on Thursday said he wants Pakistan to qualify for the semis of the ICC ODI World Cup 2023 and play against India.

India became the first team to qualify for the World Cup 2023 semi-finals when they beat Sri Lanka in Mumbai. Then they hammered second-placed South Africa to ensure they would finish on top of the points table at the end of the league stage, winning 8 matches in a row. "I want Pakistan to reach the semi-finals and play



India. It can't be a bigger semi-final than that," Ganguly told Sports Tak. The fight for the fourth position continues after Australia won a thriller

against Afghanistan on Tuesday in Pune. Pakistan will play its last match against England on Saturday, they need to win the match by a big margin and hope New

Zealand loses its match or gets washed out against Sri Lanka on Thursday.

Depending on the opponents, the date and venue of India's semi-final would also change. If it is against New Zealand or Afghanistan, then India's semi-final will be played at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on November 15 but if Pakistan qualify, then India will play the semi-final at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on November 16.

And that is one of the biggest reasons why former India captain Sourav Ganguly wants a blockbuster India vs Pakistan semi-final.

Boult becomes third Kiwi bowler to complete 600 International wickets

Bengaluru | Agencies

Trent Boult on Thursday became the third New Zealand bowler to take 600 wickets in International cricket, during the ICC ODI World Cup match against Sri Lanka at M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

With Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis' wicket, Boult completed 600 wickets in international cricket to achieve the landmark.

He became the only third Kiwi bowler after the current teammate Tim Southee and former captain Daniel Vettori to achieve this feat. Boult, 34, has taken 601 wickets in just 315 innings at a blowing



average of 25.73 so far. Earlier in the match, Boult also became the first New Zealand bowler to take 50 wickets in ODI World Cup history. Boult is also the third left-arm pacer in ODI World Cup history to take 50 or more wickets after Mitchell Starc, of Australia, who leads the chart with 59 scalps, and Pakistan legend bowler Wasim Akram.



I had kind of stagnated as an actor: **Sushmita Sen**

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress and former beauty queen has talked about her transformative experience of working in 'Aarya'. She said that she had kind of stagnated as an actor and after meeting filmmaker Ram Madhavani she said yes to the web-series. Sushmita said: "I had kind of stagnated as an actor. I was not learning anything, and I wanted to learn. I did not want to do the old stuff again, almost like running a factory of what is almost a creative endeavor. Then I met Ram, and he showed me Aarya. In flat five minutes, I said yes, and I thought, 'My god, I have to pull this off.' She added, "He came to me and said, 'I'll need you to do workshops. You'll have to unlearn and relearn.' I was like, 'This is what I've been wanting. There's a lot I have to unlearn because I'm a 90s kid and a 90s actor.' So there was a lot to do there, and the process was made so friendly and so warm that I came back as a newcomer with a completely different approach." Sushmita said that she has been "scared of theatre my whole life." She added: "He made us do theatre. There are no cuts. You're performing in an open, controlled environment, and our takes can go about to 30 to 40 minutes in one take."



Even Sara, Ananya don't know what Orry does for a living

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Ananya Panday, who appeared on the latest episode of 'Koffee With Karan' along with Sara Ali Khan, spoke about Internet sensation Orhan Awatramani, popularly known as Orry. Orry has been seen posing with a lot of celebrities and this has the Internet wondering who he is and what he does for a living.

Both the actresses actually have no idea about his profession. During the episode, show host Karan Johar asked: "Who is Orry, what does he do?" Sara said, "Orry? Who doesn't know who Orry is?" Ananya recollected one time when Orry told her who he is: "I think he goes by 'loved but misunderstood'." Kjo fired another one: "But that's what you call a phenomenon not a person". Ananya said: "That's what I was told to say."

Kjo then said: "But that's not a profession. What do you do, I'm loved but misunderstood?" "There's also a job that people have. What is his job?" he asked. Sara chimed in saying: "Orry is a really funny person". Ananya said: "He's good with captions, I keep asking him for captions. He dresses up well." Karan said: "You still haven't told me what he does (for a living)." Ananya said: "He works a lot... on himself."



Wamiqa Gabbi urges for a compassionate Diwali celebration: 'Feel empathy for animals'

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress and an ardent animal lover Wamiqa Gabbi is using her voice to promote a more responsible and considerate approach towards celebrating Diwali. The actress has urged people to celebrate with enthusiasm, but with a heightened sense of caution and care for those who share our world without being able to express themselves.

Wamiqa, a devoted dog mother to a fami-

ly of rescued and adopted dogs, said: "As an animal lover and advocate, I feel a deep empathy for the animals who experience distress during festivals like Diwali." "I feel we should celebrate, with grandiose and fervour, celebrate with compassion, but ensuring that our festivities do not inadvertently harm those who cannot speak for themselves. I have always strived to use my voice in whatever capacity through my platforms to make people realise, that celebrating and empathy during such times are both equally important," she added.

WHEN ABHIMANYU DASSANI TURNED BODYGUARD FOR MRUNAL THAKUR IN SWITZERLAND

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actor Abhimanyu Dassani has revealed how he was the "bodyguard" and "protector" for his 'Aankh Micholi' co-star Mrunal Thakur during the shoot of their movie.

From a TV sensation to a Bollywood diva, Mrunal has seen unprecedented growth in a decade of her acting career. The actress, best known for her TV show 'Kumkum Bhagya', as well as her acting chops in films such as 'Super 30', 'Batla House', 'Ghost Stories', 'Jersey' and 'Sita Raman', has developed a massive fan following across the globe.

So much so that her co-star had to literally turn into a bodyguard for her, even in Switzerland.

During a Live show on Roposo, when creator Namitaa Sachdeva asked Mrunal and Abhimanyu

about how many rishtas Mrunal got during their film 'Aankh Micholi', they made a shocking revelation.

Mrunal mentioned: "I got 27 rishtas in the movie for sure."

Abhimanyu retorted: "In real life, she gets so many proposals. In fact, I feel like I am more of her bodyguard and protector than her co-star. Not only in India but wherever we travelled for the film, be it in Switzerland or here and there, I had to be

her bodyguard as she has so many admirers." 'Aankh Micholi' revolves around a family of misfits.



Sakshi Malik, Abhishek Malhan to come together for music video

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Actress Sakshi Malik, who made an impressive appearance in the 'Bom Diggy Diggy' song the Kartik Aaryan-starrer film 'Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety', is set to join forces with social media influencer and 'Bigg Boss OTT 2' contestant Abhishek Malhan for a music video that will delve into love and heartbreak.

The narrative of the music video will explore the intricacies of human emotions.

Speaking about the collaboration, Sakshi said: "Working with Abhishek has been an absolute delight. We've poured our hearts and souls into this music video, and I can't wait for our fans to witness the magic we've created."

She further mentioned: "It's a story of love and heartbreak that will resonate with everyone, and I believe it's going to be something truly special."

Sakshi recently appeared in singer-composer Armaan Malik's music



video for 'Veham'.

Earlier, Abhishek had released a single titled 'Noori' in which he featured alongside Komal Sohi. The track combined musical talent, lyrical finesse and blends Abhishek's distinctive rap style with Komal Sohi's soulful vocals. The track touches upon the themes of love, longing, and self-dis-

covery.

He had also shared that he won't be a part of 'Bigg Boss 17', as per a media reports, the YouTuber said in his video: "Yes, I was offered the show. Matlab jiss din main 'Bigg Boss OTT' ke ghar se bahar nikla tha, ussi ke agle din raat ko mujhe 'Bigg Boss' season 17 offer ho gaya tha and I said no."

WE USED ELITE ARMIES' WEAPONS: MANEESH SHARMA

Team Absolute | Mumbai

Yash Raj Films' Tiger 3, directed by Maneesh Sharma, has created a new record of having the most number of action sequences in a YRF Spy Universe film!

Maneesh says the action sequences in Tiger 3 are at par with big Hollywood action films of our times!

He says, "This film has relentless pace because of the clear and immediate peril our duo face, and it only heightens the action. We have 12 amazing action sequences each of



which will keep you on the edge of your seat. And on IMAX they look absolutely world class - I want our fans to be so proud of seeing their hero's in sequences that stand up to a

global audience."

Maneesh adds, "We built this film and it's sequences so that when you go to the hall the tempo and tension keep rising all the way to an amazing climax. I can't wait to experience the film in cinemas with Tiger and Zoya's fans!" Two of the biggest megastars ever in the history of Indian cinema, Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif reprise their iconic roles as super spies Tiger & Zoya in Tiger 3. Produced by Aditya Chopra, Tiger 3 is set to release this Diwali, Sunday, Nov 12 in Hindi, Tamil & Telugu.

